



Duncan of Jordanstone
College of Art & Design
University of Dundee

IRENE CHAPMAN

The Deserts That Reveal the Absurd

May 2026

Art & Philosophy

[DOI 10.15132/30000125](https://doi.org/10.15132/30000125)



Except where otherwise noted, the text in this dissertation is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-Non Commercial-No Derivatives 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0) license.

All images, figures, and other third-party materials included in this dissertation are the copyright of their respective rights holders, unless otherwise stated. Reuse of these materials may require separate permission.

THE DESERTS THAT REVEAL THE ABSURD



IRENE CHAPMAN

CONTENTS:

Abstract

Introduction

I – Camus' Absurdism

- The Absurd
- 'Absurd Creation'

II – Absurdist art and its desert landscapes

- The theatre of the absurd and the metaphorical desert
- Camus, the Mediterranean, and the desert
- The different deserts of visual art

III – Process of the absurd in my work

- The lucidity of the moment
- Spontaneity
- The oil rigs

Conclusion

References

ABSTRACT:

With the problem of the absurd, Albert Camus argues that one of the first steps to revolt against it is realising and confronting the feelings caused by meaninglessness. As the realisation of the absurd is caused by an emotional moment of lucidity, one that is often hard to remember; one of the best ways to recall the feeling of it is through art. As art is more based on emotion rather than reflection, it can be argued it is more effective at expressing the feelings of the absurd than a logical argument in an essay. Through the image of the desert, many pieces of art imply the feelings of absurdity. The desert's relationship to the void makes it an image used for the realisation and confrontation of the absurd. By identifying the different deserts in several pieces of art; in literature, theatre and visual arts, as well as analysing my own artistic process, this link can be made and can be used to argue in favour of the advantage art has when expressing the feelings of absurdity. Through exploring the different examples where this is the case, the conclusion is reached; that by transmitting a feeling rather than a concept, and by showing the absurd to the viewer, it can be better understood, and the viewer is forced to confront the irrational. This is significant as it shows the importance and role of art in the absurd, as it becomes life-affirming; the first step needed to revolt against absurdity.



INTRODUCTION

I sit on a wooden chair, staring at the horizon line where the two dark entities of infinite sky and infinite sea meet. The air is still and warm. I feel my own heartbeat in my eyelids, the humid specs of sand brought by the sirocco in my nose.

I look ahead and on that dark line, so vast and all encompassing, I see all those miniscule yellow dots, going to and fro. I look at my surroundings and dig my feet into the earth. Every time I think it will be warm, but desert sand does not retain heat.

The desert landscape – beige only a few hours ago – has turned into lumps of coal crossing each other's path, towering over the coast. And so the only light that strikes my face is that of the cargo boats, so small and tiny and frail; lights flickering, trying to crawl into my eyes. They have to fight the dense humid air that has trapped me here.

They are like small specs of dust dancing across a glass table; if I looked towards a bright lamp, they would all be gone in an instant. But my eyes are now fully used to the dark, and I can start to see the glow from the horizon. It is there and I can see it. And for a brief moment I know there are oil rigs across the sea.

I get lightheaded, like the feeling after holding your breath for too long – and the line seems to blur. I can't tell where it starts and ends anymore. There is a pounding through my head, and I can feel the stones and sand under my feet, and the roughness of the wooden chair. When I was a child, I thought this feeling meant the end of it all. Now I know it is just being free.



**I KNOW THERE ARE OIL RIGS
ACROSS THE SEA, 2025**



Understanding and facing the absurdity of life has been a widely debated topic within philosophy. Albert Camus considers suicide, caused by the absurd, the “one truly serious philosophical problem”.[1] The question of the meaning of life is fundamental, and the revealing of the absurd when asking this question is inevitable. With the problem of the absurd, Camus offers a ‘solution’; of accepting the irrational and revolting against it by rejecting meaning. Within this, it can be argued that art plays a crucial role in revealing and facing the absurd, and is more effective at it than a rational argument, due to the absurd’s emotive nature.

There are many ways that it achieves this throughout different artistic expressions; in theatre, literature and visual arts. Through all of them the void is expressed. In theatre, through minimal use of language and a use of the irrational, the audience faces this feeling without the illusion of reality. Literature uses expressions of emotion to show how the absurd is felt: the readers, through the character’s realisation, can feel the absurd themselves. Visual arts use negative space and emphasise emptiness so the viewer infers the absurd from the piece. All of these call to the absurd through feeling and not explanation. As the feeling of the absurd is elusive, art helps to recall it and can make its viewers feel it in the moment, as well as confront it. The role of art here is a significant one.

These artistic expressions all have a common way of evoking absurdity through the image of the desert. The desert has often been used as a symbol for the void, as the empty, barren landscape gives whoever is in it the necessary space to contemplate their life. It is usually associated with the extremes; high temperatures in the day, freezing in the night, and it is completely inhospitable to human life and most life in general. It is a land of spirituality and biblical encounters. “I have always loved the desert.” Wrote Antoine de Saint-Exupéry in *The Little Prince*, “One sits down on a desert sand dune, sees nothing, hears nothing. Yet through the silence something throbs, and gleams...”[2] Looking at the emptiness of the desert can provoke feelings of vertigo as we realise the existence of the absurd.

By exploring the concept of absurdity, analysing different pieces of art and exploring my own artistic process – all through the lens of the image of the desert – I will aim to argue for the superiority of art when expressing the absurd and its importance as part of the understanding and confronting of it.

[1] Albert Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, trans. by Justin O’Brien (1942; Penguin Books, 2005). p. 1.

[2] Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, *The Little Prince* (Wordsworth Editions, 1995).



Briton Rivière, The Temptation in the Wilderness, 1898, Oil on Canvas, Guildhall Art Gallery, London. This painting depicts the Biblical narrative of Christ fasting during his 40 days in the Judean desert.



I – CAMUS' ABSURDISM

THE ABSURD

The absurd is a term that refers to the irrational relationship between the human being and the universe, where the human is unable to find a clear meaning. Albert Camus, who is arguably most associated with the term, described it as being “born of this confrontation between the human need and the unreasonable silence of the world.”[1] Man or the universe are not absurd, but rather the paradoxical relationship between them is. Due to this, we are unable to understand reality and unable to find a meaning, hence leading us to a relentless search for it.

Most thinkers that mention the absurd describe the feeling it provokes. Søren Kierkegaard approaches the absurd from a religious perspective, where the lack of control over our birth and death and not being able to prove God's existence leads us to notice the paradox of not having a clear meaning yet yearning for one. He refers to it as a form of anxiety or despair, which he describes as “the dizziness of freedom”, [2] in which freedom refers to the choice of how to live one's life after realising the absurd. A similar feeling is described by Jean-Paul Sartre in his novel *Nausea*, where, after noticing the objects around him, the main character faces sudden, nauseating feelings of awareness, that only become more frequent. [3] He develops a detachment and apathy towards the world around him, his attempts at avoiding it becoming futile, making him question his own existence. The feeling described in the novel is then what leads to its philosophical point, as it is caused by the understanding that reality is groundless and absurd. In his book *The Myth of Sisyphus*, Camus acknowledges both of these descriptions of the feeling and he himself states that “At any street corner the feeling of absurdity can strike any man in the face.” [4]

There is arguably a common idea of a feeling of dread that appears suddenly, triggered by the realisation of the absurd's existence, whether that is through an unanswered prayer or by close examination of a chestnut tree. The absurd provides a terrifying realisation: that we are so free that it becomes a burden. With this, several options emerge as how to react to it, hence why Camus insists that suicide is the one philosophical problem we should worry about, as it may be the choice some take to escape the existential anguish. [5]

The freedom we have, however, does not imply one can choose to have a meaning or not. To have a meaning in life is a contradiction to the absurd itself, hence why Camus disagrees with it. He insists on not escaping the feeling of anguish through believing we can have a meaning, as, in Camus' eyes, it is a running away from the truth, as a meaning outside of one's condition is essentially still meaningless. [6]

His suggestion is that we do not get the choice of meaning, and reiterates the bitter freedom the absurd gives: “the absurd does not liberate; it binds”. If we had to choose between having a God to give us meaning or having the freedom to do what we wanted, the former would be the more appealing option. However, we do not have this choice. [7] As this is the case, he makes the point we must, regardless of the absurd condition and without escaping from it, enjoy life without finding a meaning in it, and that is where our choice lies. He refuses the idea of suicide, as it does not get rid of the absurd, but essentially enhances it. In Camus and Nihilism, Ashley Woodward makes a comparison of this to Descartes' “cogito” argument, where the act of doubting is enough to show that the one thing that cannot be doubted is one's existence. In the case of Camus, the question of suicide rules it out as a solution completely, as it would not answer the question of the absurd. [8] Instead of suicide, Camus suggests one must revolt, hence the line “One must imagine Sisyphus happy.” That gives the essay its title. [9] Like the Greek hero, aware of his eternal condition, one must rebel and keep pushing the boulder up the hill; to keep on living.

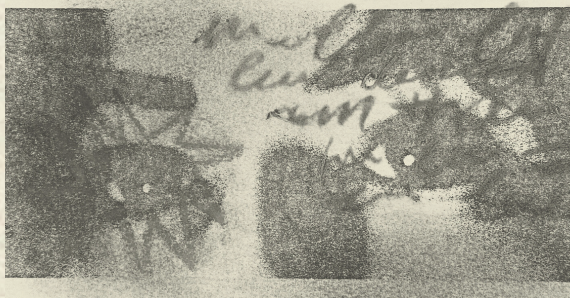


**ALBERT
CAMUS**

In his essay *The Absurd*, Thomas Nagel explores in depth why we believe life is absurd. He rejects the idea that it is due to the fact that nothing we do will matter in the future, as by that logic, anything in the future does not matter now either and it should not be what determines meaning.[10] He also rejects the idea that meaninglessness is dictated by how large the universe is or by the fact that we die, as if either of these were untrue, our lives could still be absurd. His definition of the absurd is the conflict between the importance we place on meaning and the objective meaninglessness of the world. Due to this, he believes Camus' argument is "romantic and slightly self-pitying" and rather suggests that absurdity is a human trait we can notice due to our insight, and it is ironic that we give meaning that much importance when there is not a clear one. There should be no reason to resent the absurd, and it is only a cause of anguish if we interpret it in that way. The "cosmic unimportance" of the situation should make our attitude towards the absurd ironic and not heroic (as he describes Camus').[11]

Although Nagel makes a convincing point, Camus' vision acknowledges the nature of the emotion one can feel from the absurd, stating that "From the moment absurdity is recognised, it becomes a passion, the most harrowing of all." [12] The anguish or nausea one can feel is taken into account; because of the feelings so linked to the absurd it could be understood as an emotional thing at heart. In his essay comparing the two philosophers, Jeffrey Gordon makes a good point in defence of Camus: "If human life is indeed absurd, it would be difficult to imagine a more important fact about it." [13] Regardless of how unimportant this fact is to the entire universe, it is an important fact for humans, whom it is relevant to. The inevitable anguish this fact may cause us then gives us a chance to be heroic about it instead of suffering.

When looking at Camus' view of art with relation to the absurd, he mentions that when interacting with the absurd, it is "a question of breathing with it, of recognising its lessons and recovering their flesh". [14] Art is a key part in engaging with it, as to do this in full depth, emotion is needed. When the absurd is felt is when one can begin to understand it, and since the arts focus on emotion, they are one of the best mediums to engage with the absurd, arguably better than a rational explanation in a philosophical essay.



- [1] Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, p.26
- [2] Soren Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Anxiety: A Simple Psychologically Oriented Deliberation in View of the Dogmatic Problem of Hereditary Sin* (1844; W. W. Norton & Company, 2014). p. 61.
- [3] Robyn A. Bantel, "The Experiences of Nausea and Adventure: An Analysis of the Opposition of Existence and Being in Sartre's *Nausea*," *Research in Phenomenology*, 11.1 (1981), pp. 25–40, JSTOR, doi:10.1163/156916481x00027., pp. 25-26
- [4] Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, p. 9
- [5] *Ibid.*, p.1
- [6] *Ibid.*, p. 49.
- [7] *Ibid.*, p. 65.
- [8] Ashley Woodward, "Camus and Nihilism," *Sophia*, 50.4 (2011), pp. 543–59, doi:10.1007/s11841-011-0274-0. p. 551
- [9] Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, p.119.
- [10] Thomas Nagel, "The Absurd," *The Journal of Philosophy*, 68.20 (1971), pp. 716–27, doi: <https://doi.org/10.2307/2024942>. p. 716
- [11] *Ibid.* p. 726
- [12] Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, p. 20.
- [13] Jeffrey Gordon, "Nagel or Camus on the Absurd?," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 45.1 (1984), pp. 15–28, JSTOR, doi:10.2307/2107324. p. 28.
- [14] Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, p. 90

'ABSURD CREATION'

Both in his essays *The Myth of Sisyphus* and *The Rebel*, Camus focuses on art in the context of the absurd. In *The Myth of Sisyphus*, inspired by Nietzsche's ideas, he states that "Creating is living doubly", [1] where even if it is absurd, each artist tries to recreate their own reality. He believes art is linked to the individual; it cannot detach itself from its creator. [2] As creating or not does not change anything, the artist makes the most of their life even in its absurdity, as they create knowing that it is absurd and in spite of it. [3] Camus presents the artist as a rebel, creating for the sake of creating.

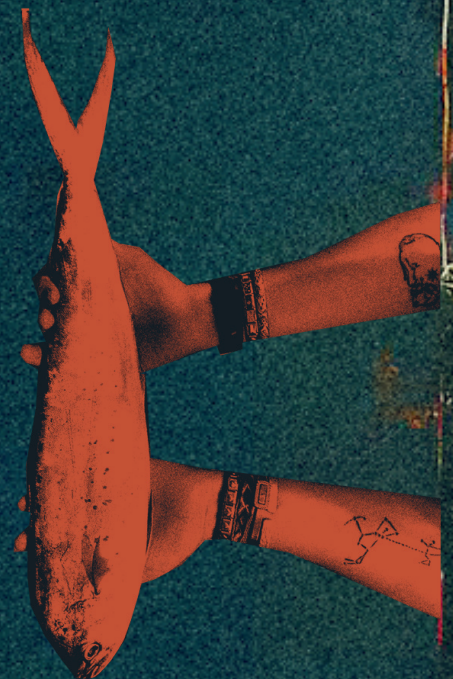
Philosopher George F. Sefler mentions that "description is the technical key note of Camus' aesthetics", where an artist should not seek to interpret or justify the world, but simply recreate it in their own vision. [4] In his later essay *The Rebel*, Camus revisits this idea. The artist both repudiates and needs reality, and their description of it becomes a distinctive one. Every thought means something, so art that has no meaning attached to it at all does not exist. To make an absurd work of art, the artist "disputes reality, but does not hide from it." [5] The art might challenge reality, but it should not be seen as a replacement or improvement of it. If the artist attempts to replace and explain reality, they are not living doubly; there is an attempt to silence the reality of the absurd, but just as Camus explains for suicide, the absurdity is enhanced. If they create for the sake of creation, exalting the emotion of reality without attempting to justify it, they can face the absurd and live a happy life.

He places an emphasis on feeling. Referring specifically to literature, Camus mentions that literary creation should use reality "with all its warmth and its blood, its passion and its outcries." [6] Both in literature and visual arts he insists on the emotion of life and the absurd being significant, as it is usually through feeling that one realises the absurd. Similarly to the paradox of the absurd, there is a paradox in an absurd work of art; it is born of thought, but thought cannot show through in the piece: "Expression begins where thought ends". [7] The absurd artist uses feeling but refuses to give it a deeper meaning as it would be dishonest, the piece stands as itself. This interpretation seems convincing for establishing that art is one of the best ways of facing the absurd.

When explaining his ideas on art, Camus takes a moment to focus on landscape painting:

The painter isolates his subject, which is the first way of unifying it. Landscapes flee, vanish from the memory, or destroy one another. That is why the landscape painter or the painter of still life isolates in space and time things which normally change with the light, get lost in an infinite perspective or disappear under the impact of other values. The first thing that a landscape painter does is to square off his canvas. He eliminates as much as he includes. [8]

This idea is significant, as it explains that the art shows a moment that was there, but was lost to the constant change of reality. There is the inevitable challenging of reality he previously mentioned; as the artist chooses to eliminate a large part of it by squaring off the canvas, but there is also the exaltation of some aspects of it, with the depiction of a particular moment, a feeling caused by the landscape, that is then trapped in time. In every art form, and especially in Camus' own novels, landscape plays an important role; as a medium for the absurd and the feeling that comes with it.



[1] Ibid., p.91

[2] Ibid., p.93

[3] Ibid., p.94

[4] George F. Sefler, "The Existential Vs. The Absurd: The Aesthetics of Nietzsche and Camus," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 32.3 (1974), pp. 415–21, JSTOR, doi:<https://doi.org/10.2307/428426>. p.415

[5] Albert Camus, *The Rebel* (1951; 1st ed., Penguin Classics, 2000). p. 203

[6] Sefler, p. 416

[7] Ibid., p.95

[8] Camus, *The Rebel*, p. 201



II – ABSURDIST ART AND ITS DESERT LANDSCAPES

Taking specific examples of art that engages with the topic of absurdity, there is a pattern that can be noticed. As the absurd is inherently emotional, it is usually through art's instinct and focus on feeling that helps the viewers realise the absurd, better than an explanation in a philosophical essay would. Art is the trigger to realise absurdity. In these pieces, the viewers are exposed to the void through the form of deserts, both literal and metaphorical, which create the feelings of the absurd in the viewer.

THE THEATRE OF THE ABSURD AND THE METAPHORICAL DESERT

Martin Esslin coined the term 'The Theatre of the Absurd', in his book from 1961 of the same name, in reference to a group of plays by Samuel Beckett, Arthur Adamov, and Eugène Ionesco. In Esslin's argument, these three playwrights have a similarity in their writing; in which their characters face the absurd world around them with comedy and tragedy, as well as nonsensical scenes and dialogue. The theatre of the absurd, according to him, helps the viewer realise and face absurdity directly. He quotes Camus in *The Myth of Sisyphus* when defining what he means by absurd in this context:

A world that can be explained by reasoning, however faulty, is a familiar world. But in a universe that is suddenly deprived of illusions and of light, man feels a stranger. His is an irremediable exile, because he is deprived of memories of a lost homeland as much as he lacks the hope of a promised land to come. This divorce between man and his life, the actor and his setting, truly constitutes the feeling of Absurdity.[1]

Esslin emphasises the irrationality of the absurd and its emotional nature. He mentions, however, that whilst philosophers like Camus attempt to explain the absurd with a logical reasoning, playwrights of the Theatre of the Absurd are able to convey the true emotions of absurdity through instinct, by presenting the absurd as it is, rather than attempting to argue about what its terms are in relation to the human condition.[2] This is the significance of art. Even though Esslin is critical of Camus' essays and plays for being too rational in their presentation of the absurd, he still agrees with most of his definition of the absurd and his ideas that the artist is an absurdist, as well as does not take into account Camus' novels as part of his philosophical discourse, something that will be explored in a later section.



Theatre of the absurd



It is through exposing the viewers to the void that the theatre of the absurd shows its feeling and helps the audience face absurdity. In an earlier review of *The Theatre of the Absurd*, Esslin seems to mention the idea of exposing the “barrenness” of language and stage in this form of theatre, achieving what Brechtian theatre did not in its attempts at alienating the viewer.[3] He mentions that the spectators are forced to see an extreme version of what the world truly is; “a world without faith, meaning, and genuine freedom of will.”[4] The theatre of the absurd’s focus on emptiness and silence seems to present the void as a metaphorical desert – the stage being the empty space needed to begin to question one’s reality.

Taking the example of Ionesco’s *Exit the King*[5] helps show this idea further. The play explores the last days of a dying king, one that has supernatural powers, as we watch his kingdom crumble alongside him. It presents the feeling of the absurd in the face of death, and the conflict between grasping onto reality or accepting fate. The King, on his deathbed, tries to clutch things that represent immortality; the physical elements around him. The Doctor says “When kings die, they clutch at the walls, the trees, the fountains, the moon”[6] implying that the material world around them is what brings them stability. Death and absurdity are perceived as emptiness.

The play also does not have much description in terms of set design. It happens all in the same throne room, and there is little determination of what it needs. This minimalism, the desert of a stage, further adds to the feelings of the absurd as it distances us from reality. Pairing this with the bizarre situation (of a four-hundred-year-old King who has supernatural powers yet is dying), the absurd comes through, presenting itself to the viewer as an empty, strange, inevitable force.[7]

The consistent themes in the theatre of the absurd that Esslin mentions all seem to connect to an emptiness – in words, in stage, in meaning. These metaphorical deserts are what show the feelings of absurdity to the audience, something which philosophical essays do not seem to achieve in the same way. The minimalism makes the audience feel the nausea of the absurd, which is a crucial step when facing it.

[1] Martin Esslin, *The Theatre of the Absurd* (1961; Vintage Books, 2004) <<https://faculty.uobasrah.edu.iq/uploads/teaching/1642439873.pdf>>. p. 20

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 21

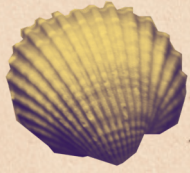
[3] Martin Esslin, “The Theatre of the Absurd,” *The Tulane Drama Review*, 4.4 (1960), pp. 3–15, doi:10.2307/1124873. p. 10

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 6

[5] Eugene Ionesco, *Exit the King* (1962; Malthouse/Bevoir, 2007) <<https://www.scribd.com/document/830367095/Exit-the-King-by-Eugene-Ionesco>>.

[6] Samantha Piede, “Showing, Telling, or Proselytizing the Absurd : Dramatic Conventions in the Works of Albert Camus and Eugène Ionesco / by Samantha Piede.” (unpublished Masters Thesis, Millersville University of Pennsylvania, 2018) <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/community.31982624>>. p. 54

[7] *Ibid.*, pp. 56-57



CAMUS, THE MEDITERRANEAN, AND THE DESERT



Although considered a philosopher, Albert Camus is arguably most famously known for his novels, such as *The Stranger* (also known as *The Outsider*) or *The Plague*. This led him to win a Nobel Prize in Literature in 1957, only three years before his death. His work would often have similar philosophical themes as his essays, the prize being awarded to him "for his important literary production, which with clear-sighted earnestness illuminates the problems of the human conscience in our times."^[1] It could be argued that his novels and more creative pieces of writing provide more of an insight into the feeling of the absurd than his essays, as they show the emotions needed to realise absurdity. These emotions are often conveyed through thorough descriptions of the landscapes and sensations the characters face, helping us picture the feeling for ourselves, rather than attempt to connect them from a philosophical concept to a real-life feeling.

In *The Stranger*, Meursault goes to his mother's funeral and has to go through the countryside interior in the summer heat, which he describes in great detail as it seems to bother him more than his mother's passing. Later on in the book, when he is at the beach in the stand-off, it is the sun shining against the man's knife and into his eyes, and the warm wind blowing against him that makes Meursault shoot him five times. As he is indifferent to both of these, society decides he should be sentenced to death. Once he is in his cell, towards the end of the novel, it is looking out into the starry night that allows him to accept the "gentle indifference of the world" and come to terms with the absurdity of his situation.^[2]

In his short story *The Adulterous Woman* there is a similar idea. Janine, an unhappily married woman, travels through the Algerian desert with her husband for his work trip. She notices the heat in the bus as they travel through a sandstorm. When they reach their destination of the oasis, they visit a fort with a view of the desert that moves her, but he wishes to leave quickly back to their hotel as it is cold. That night, after being unable to sleep, Janine rushes out of bed and runs back to the fort, taking in the desert landscape and the stars, feeling more full of life than ever before. Eventually she heads back to the hotel, where her husband wakes up and she bursts into tears in front of him, telling him nothing is wrong. Camus' emotional descriptions of the desert landscape are what help us understand Janine's feeling. In the silence and the cold of the desert at night, as well as the few constellations falling on the horizon, Janine wishes for the "silence to form in her".^[3]

Having lived most of his early life in French Algeria and his mother being of Minorcan^[4] descent, his writing would often be set in the Algerian desert or the arid coasts of the Mediterranean. The emotional and important parts of his novels, where the characters face the absurd, describe these landscapes. These became a significant part of his work that has often been linked and identified with the theme of the absurd. He explained the feeling of these landscapes during his travels around the Mediterranean:

If the language of these countries harmonized with what echoed deeply within me, it was not because it answered my questions but because it made them superfluous. Instead of prayers of thanksgiving rising to my lips, it was this Nada [in Spanish in the original] whose birth is only possible at the sight of landscapes crushed by the sun. There is no love of life without despair of life.^[5]



The Nada (Spanish word for nothing) of this scenery is what makes it so attractive to Camus. The desert is a place of isolation and of biblical encounters, but he never makes of it anything more than what it is – the world is still indifferent. Camus found himself surprised as what he saw “was not a world made to man’s measure, but one that closed in upon him”, where the rough natural landscapes were indifferent to the existence of humanity.[6] In his essays, he presents a logical argument, but it is in his novels that Camus reaches out to the intuitive and artistic side of absurdity.

Professor Anthony Zahareas describes the desert as the “perfect symbol for the absurd”, as “it is there, it has its own laws, yet its nature and origins remain obscure; it is all that is dry, barren, meaningless, and indifferent in human life.”[7] It is inhospitable to humans, same as the absurd makes us feel out of place in the universe.

The empty landscapes in these novels, it could be argued, do a similar thing to the empty stage in the theatre of the absurd. They are a form of phenomenological reduction, where their minimalism and simplicity make us unable to attach a meaning to them, unlike we do to most objects. This is what helps us see the irrational so clearly in them. The “squaring off” of the canvas that Camus mentions; the elimination of value and focus on the emptiness of the desert scenes, is something that he himself seems to use in his novels to highlight absurdity. Camus mentions phenomenology “confirms absurd thought in its initial assertion that there is no truth, but merely truths.”[8] The desert, in its emptiness, does not provide us with a truth, but a void, that then asserts the absurd through the feeling it creates in us. The reduction provides the moment of lucidity necessary to understand it.



These settings of Camus’ work all evoke a feeling of vastness and emptiness, of oppressing forces that later release. Instead of rationalising the feelings of the absurd, we feel them; the summer heat pressures, the sun gleams into one’s eyes, and the sands hit against the bus windows, wanting to be let in. It is the world’s indifference knocking gently but consistently to be let into each person, and only when it is accepted and allowed in, do the characters realise and revolt. These forces seem to feel excessive and overwhelming, the discomfort of the absurd looming over the characters, up until the point where the realisation is made, through the empty desert. The clarity caused by this emptiness is what is needed to understand.

The emotion that Camus describes in the characters’ moment of lucidity is what makes his novels more effective than his essays at showing people’s interaction with the absurd. The description of the nauseating feeling of looking at the desert allows the readers to understand the feeling directly, as if they themselves were looking towards it. These examples show the overall importance of the role of art when facing the problem of absurdity, as it is the medium needed to understand it, and face the feelings caused by it. By creating art that appeals to this, Camus shows the reality of the irrational, helping his readers embrace it and begin to live in spite of it.

[1] Nobel Prize, “Nobel Prize in Literature 1957,” NobelPrize.Org, 2025 <<https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/literature/1957/summary/>>.

[2] Albert Camus, *The Stranger* (1946; Vintage, 1989).

[3] Albert Camus, *Exile and the Kingdom: Stories* (1957; Penguin UK, 2013), pp. 1–16.

[4] From the Balearic Isles in Spain.

[5] Rotger, Albert Camus, an Algerian of Minorcan Origin

[6] Francesc M. Rotger, “Albert Camus, an Algerian of Minorcan Origin,” *European Institute of the Mediterranean*, n.d. <<https://www.iemed.org/publication/albert-camus-an-algerian-of-minorcan-origin/>>.

[7] Anthony Zahareas, “La Femme Adultère: Camus’s Ironie Vision of the Absurd,” *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, 5.3 (1963), pp. 319–28, JSTOR, doi:<https://www.jstor.org/stable/40753767>. p. 324

[8] Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, p. 41



THE DIFFERENT DESERTS OF VISUAL ART

There are some examples of visual art that can help further argue for the importance of art when facing the absurd and the link between the feelings of it and the desert. When looking at the absurd as a visual category, it is interesting to try and understand what the different versions of these deserts are.

The 1970 film *El Topo*, directed by Alejandro Jodorowsky, is an Acid Western set in the depths of a desert.[1] The storyline is surreal and often has inexplicable scenes that cause discomfort in the viewer. The plot consists of a man, El Topo, who dwells the dunes. He meets a woman he names Marah. She insists El Topo has to win several duels with the four great gun masters of the desert, but eventually, he loses the last duel as the man kills himself before El Topo kills him, which leads him to be abandoned by her. He awakens years later in a cave of people outcast by a nearby town led by a cult, and chooses to help them escape. He exits the cave, and his now adult son tries to help him so that he can eventually kill him, but when the time comes, he is unable to. The people of the cave are freed but all get killed by townspeople, leading El Topo to immolate himself and to massacre the town.

At the time, many critics seemed to disagree on the film's point, if it had one, and on the impact of it for the surrealist genre.[2] *El Topo* seems similar to Camus' *The Stranger* in its moral nihilism. The viewer has an idea that what El Topo is attempting to do is 'right' in his eyes, but one cannot completely comprehend where this idea comes from, as he kills and destroys everything in his path. There is a blurring of the lines of right and wrong which appeals to the absurd, due to the lack of meaning. The viewer inevitably notices and faces absurdity throughout the film.



Scene where Marah and El Topo walk along the sandy dunes. Their silhouettes are contrasted with the emptiness of the landscape.



One of El Topo's duels in the rockier scenery.

Regardless of its plot, it is arguably mostly through the visuals of landscape, the use of sound and minimal language that this film actually evokes the absurd. The landscapes in the shots are barren, showing endless dunes of sand contrasted with El Topo's dark silhouette. At times, it also changes into more rocky, rough scenery, but it always remains arid and empty. That is part of what causes the feeling of absurdity in the film, as through these scenes you can perceive the loneliness of the characters in the world around them. The landscape is inhospitable – it is confusing, it looks the same, it is empty. The desert is the one consistent theme throughout the film; it is always there, no matter who lives and who dies. The repetitive, simple noises, and the minimal dialogue throughout enhance this feeling of emptiness. In minute 38, El Topo states that "the desert is circular". It is endless and there is no escape from it, no matter where you travel to. This endless nature recalls to the absurd, and the Sisyphean task that is to keep on living.

In minute 36, Marah repeats the word "Nada" several times as she walks around in a circle through the dunes. The landscape is "nada", the same way Camus described the Mediterranean coastlines: it is empty, there is nothing that one can grasp onto. The repetition of this word in this scene really brings out the absurd in the film.

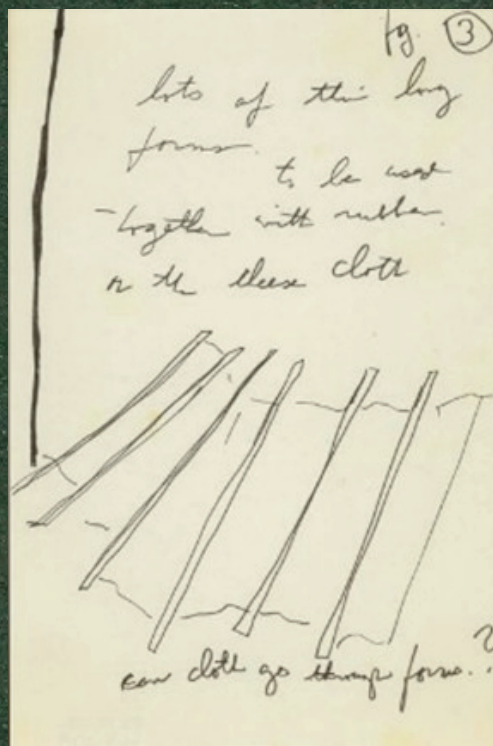


The contrast between the silhouettes and the landscape behind them is often used in this film.

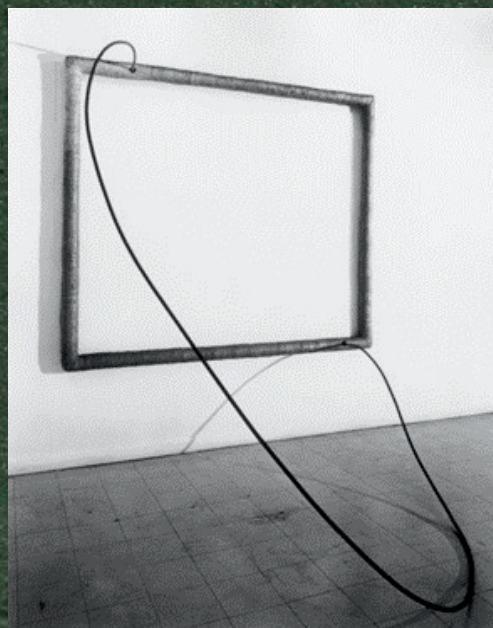


There does not have to be a physical desert in a piece for a desert to be implied. Sometimes the feeling of emptiness achieves the same effect. This is the case with Eva Hesse's postminimal work. She was aware of the absurd and its relationship to art, and how art can be a way of rebelling against it. In an interview for Artforum in 1970 she stated that "Life doesn't last; art doesn't last." [3] This idea seems to reflect Camus' thoughts with art "challenging reality" without "hiding from it" [4] as she understood that the creation of art is essentially absurd, but chose to do it anyway. By creating art in spite of the absurdity of life, and acknowledging the ephemeral nature of it, Hesse challenges the absurd whilst confronting it head on. The minimal nature of her work evokes the same feeling that the physical desert does; the phenomenological reduction still applies as there is little we can adhere a clear idea or value to.

In her piece Hang Up we are faced with an empty frame that our eyes are naturally drawn to, the emptiness of the frame is striking. The cord that runs from the top to the bottom is connected, but seems to fulfil no purpose whilst doing so – it is not attached to the wall or holds the piece in any way. The emptiness inside the frame and the futility of the cord seem to be in conversation with each other, both calling to the void. There is a metaphorical desert we find it hard to look away from, and through it the viewer is forced to question the irrational.



Eva Hesse, No Title, 1969, Ink and graphite on paper, Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin



Eva Hesse, Hang Up, 1966, Acrylic, cloth, wood, cord, steel, The Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago



There is a similar approach in Rhona Bitner's photography of empty theatre stages. The stage, like the frame in *Hang Up*, usually has something in it, and it is simply there to bring attention to that object. By removing this we are forced to reassess the value we place on what is usually on the stage and we are forced to face the discomfort of emptiness.

The stage being the subject of these images also relates back to the topic of the theatre of the absurd. When looking back to Esslin's quoting of Camus it is put nicely into context: "This divorce between man and his life, the actor and his setting, truly constitutes the feeling of Absurdity." [5]

The removal of the setting with no illusions in the way, as it happens on the empty stage, makes us feel the absurd clearly. There is no acting taking place as it is presented for what it is. It is like the desert in its phenomenological reduction – there is nothing that gets in between the human and the absurd.

Both with the physical presence of the desert and the metaphorical one; through emptiness and futility, the absurd is represented in visual arts. The discomfort and confusing feelings of these deserts help us realise the absurd as viewers of these pieces, understanding the feelings of the absurd better than with a rational explanation of them.



Rhona Bitner, O1 - STAGE, 2008, Photography



Rhona Bitner, M1 - STAGE, 2008, Photography



[1] *El Topo*, dir. by Alejandro Jodorowsky (ABKCO Films, 1970).

[2] The New York Times, "Is 'El Topo' a Con?," The New York Times, May 23, 1971 <<https://www.nytimes.com/1971/05/23/archives/is-el-topo-a-con-is-el-topo-a-con.html>>.

[3] Hauser & Wirth, "Eva Hesse," Hauser & Wirth, n.d. <<https://www.hauserwirth.com/artists/2810-eva-hesse/>>.

[4] Camus, *The Rebel*, p. 203

[5] Esslin, *The Theatre of the Absurd*, p. 20

II – PROCESS OF THE ABSURD IN MY WORK

Desert of Tabernas, Almería, Spain, 2023

THE LUCIDITY OF THE MOMENT

Camus believed that it is through lucid understanding of the absurd that one can revolt against it. By having this moment of lucidity, there is no room for self-deception.[1] Art, being so focused on emotion and expression, helps convey the feelings necessary for this lucidity. It is through the image of the desert that this moment is often conveyed, in his novels and in the arts in general, almost as if it was a 'trigger' for the absurd. The desert is empty, and through the nausea that this creates in us, we understand the absurd. This moment comes from the emotion the emptiness provides us with. It is the first step to face it, without the realisation one continues to live in "illusion".

Within my own artwork, the desert is an important image. Coming from a region in Southern Spain where the only desert of Europe is present, I tend to use its imagery regardless of the medium I use. The landscapes of Almería are similar to those that Camus describes in some of his novels, as it is only 170km away from the coast of Oran.[2] The desert and the Mediterranean Sea, both so representative of the quality of *Nada*, are a way to explore the feeling of the absurd.

Through my work, I attempt to suspend moments and feelings in time, and the desert and sea often become the backdrop. Silhouettes and human figures stand in the middle of these landscapes, alone, surrounded by emptiness. The minimalism of some of the pieces, especially when done through printmaking, add to this empty feeling. This emptiness is not inherently negative, but could be interpreted as clarity. In a similar way to Camus' novels, where the desert can be both a cause of anguish and a medium for understanding, these pieces can be interpreted in different ways.

Some of the depictions are of typical Mediterranean scenes; of people outside, in the sun, of wooden boats sprawled across a beach or floating in the horizon. They show a serenity in spite of the absurd. This is what Camus called the "Mediterranean Spirit"; of taking each moment at a time and having a harmony between one and one's surroundings.[3] Rather than being native to a country, he preferred being native to a climate, to a place of those "landscapes crushed by the sun". This is the rebellion against the absurd, where we do not give life a meaning, and as Camus mentions at the end of *The Rebel*, "in the light, the earth remains our first and last love." [4]

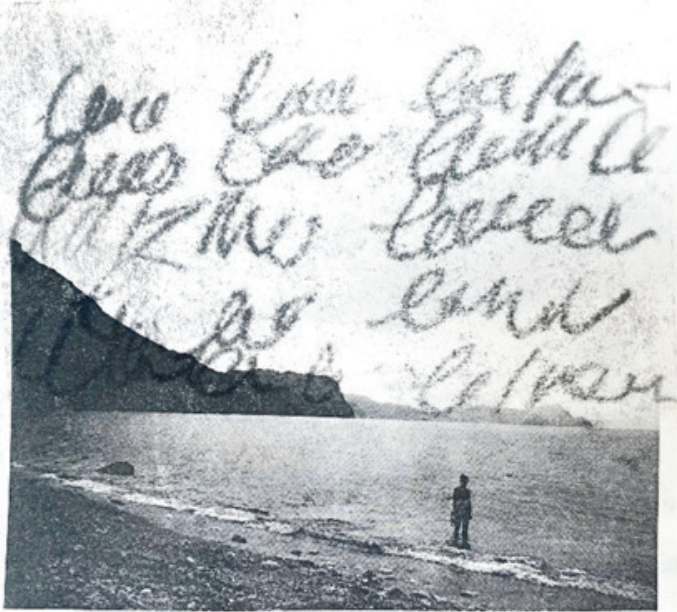
The feeling of the absurd lingers in these pieces, and they are interpreted by each person individually. To me, they are moments caught in time where the lucidity of the absurd has been present. I focus on the emotion of the moment as this is what is important for processing and understanding absurdity. That is how art helps us deal with the absurd.

[1] Timothy J Freeman, "Myth of Sisyphus," in *Existentialism Philosophy* 360, no. 16, University of Hawaii, 2010
<<https://www2.hawaii.edu/~freeman/courses/phil360/16.%20Myth%20of%20Sisyphus.pdf>>. p. 1

[2] Algerian city; Camus' *The Plague* takes place here

[3] Alexandra De Cramer, "The Radical Notion of the 'Mediterranean Spirit' and Why We Need It Now More than Ever," *Monocle*, 2025
<<https://monocle.com/culture/society-how-we-live/radical-notion-of-mediterranean-spirit/>>.

[4] Camus, *The Rebel*, p. 248



**UNTITLED, 2025,
ACETONE
TRANSFER**



**UNTITLED,
2025,
ACETONE
TRANSFER**



**CALA
HIGUERA,
2025, WATER
COLOUR
AND
COLOUR
PENCIL**

SPONTANEITY

One of the most important parts of the process of my work is the intuitive aspect. I find that I work best when a piece is made spontaneously, as that way it is truthful to the 'in the moment' feelings that are trying to be conveyed. If an idea for a piece is made after much reflection, I feel like a lot of the emotion associated with it is no longer present. For the emotion of the absurd to come through, it needs to be done in the moment. This is why when it comes to showing the effects of the absurd, art is more effective at doing so, as it expresses sensations and emotions of the moment. As I want the emotion of the pieces to be preserved, I try to be as intuitive as possible.

The idea of spontaneity is also significant when talking about how to face the absurd. The existentialist Simone de Beauvoir explores the ideas of spontaneity and reflection in her 1944 essay *Pyrrhus and Cineas*. She makes an analogy with the story of a King; Pyrrhus, and his adviser Cineas, where the latter asks the King what he plans to do after achieving his next conquests.



Water under the bridge, 2025, Acetone transfer



Genoveses, 2025, Acetone transfer

After going through all the empires he intends to conquer, Pyrrhus finally admits that he will rest, to which Cineas replies "Why not rest right away?" as that seems to be the end goal anyways.[1] Beauvoir asserts that although Cineas is seen as the wiser one in this debate, we must be like Pyrrhus in the face of the absurd. She mentions that "Pyrrhus speaks of resting only because he lacks imagination".[2] It may seem absurd for Pyrrhus to attempt to conquer, but it does not mean he should not do it, as he is not doing it to be able to rest at the end of it, but for the conquering itself. Rather than reflecting on the questions of "why?", we must be spontaneous and live without attempting to define our life in term of its potential overall meaning. Every day should be taken for what it is. Beauvoir applies this to all our projects:

A project is exactly what it decides to be. It has the meaning that it gives itself. One cannot define it from the outside. It is not contradictory; it is possible and coherent as soon as it exists, and it exists as soon as a man makes it exist.[3]

The spontaneity of our projects is what allows us to face the absurd by focusing on the emotions and experiences of every day. Art is important as it helps us apply this to our life; by creating it – and focusing on the feeling – rather than reflecting on what to create, we make each day more genuine and more fulfilling within the context of the absurd.

This idea resonates with how I approach my work, as often when reflecting too much and trying to give it specific meanings, it loses the emotion that makes it effective. This is why with whatever medium I use I try and take a 'collage' approach – by cutting, moving around, sticking things in place in the moment – I never plan too far ahead. Printmaking specifically is a very interesting medium, as it is very spontaneous and unpredictable, but also requires time and some planning. The creation of the images themselves is fast; with transfers the acetone evaporates so they have to be put on the paper or plate quickly.

The preparing of a plate, with waterless lithography for example, is more planned. The plate needs to be washed, have the silicone applied and it can take a few days to dry. Choosing paper and mixing a colour is also planned, but then the actual printing of a plate is unpredictable. Every print is unique and a surprise, and slowly, the plate breaks the image down into something different. Part of the interest of printmaking is the process, not just the end result, as the results are always uncertain.

By approaching my work in this way, I try to ensure the feelings of the piece shine through, following some of Camus' ideas of "expression begins where thought ends." [4] With this mentality one can understand and face art, but also the absurd through it.



[1] Simone de Beauvoir, *Pyrrhus and Cineas* - Philosophical Writings (1944; University of Illinois, 2004) <<https://archive.org/details/philosophicalwri0000beau/mode/2up>>. p. 90

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 98

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 100

[4] Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, p. 95



I AM NOT THE ONLY ONE

In those few days, each day was
harder to stomach than the day
before, one of those days when you
bedding into the bed, every night
most, the air is still and warm, I feel
spots of sweat brought by the heat of
being in the room.

I look ahead and see that the days
minutes follow, day after day, and
similar to the days of the past, but
the days that I have lived through
I think it will be the same, but I don't
to have been used to the days of the
past.

The moment of the day, the moment
into a dark one. It is not of the
few hours ago, but now it is the
into the night, and I am alone, the
at a day and night, it is the only
doctor, should do that he should
be here.

I hear the ship was moving, I once
the only thing that ran through my
that that is to be done by the
small spots of light dancing across
world will be gone in an instant,
want to see the glow that I have
of that the light is gone from the
moment I know that I have lost
the sea.

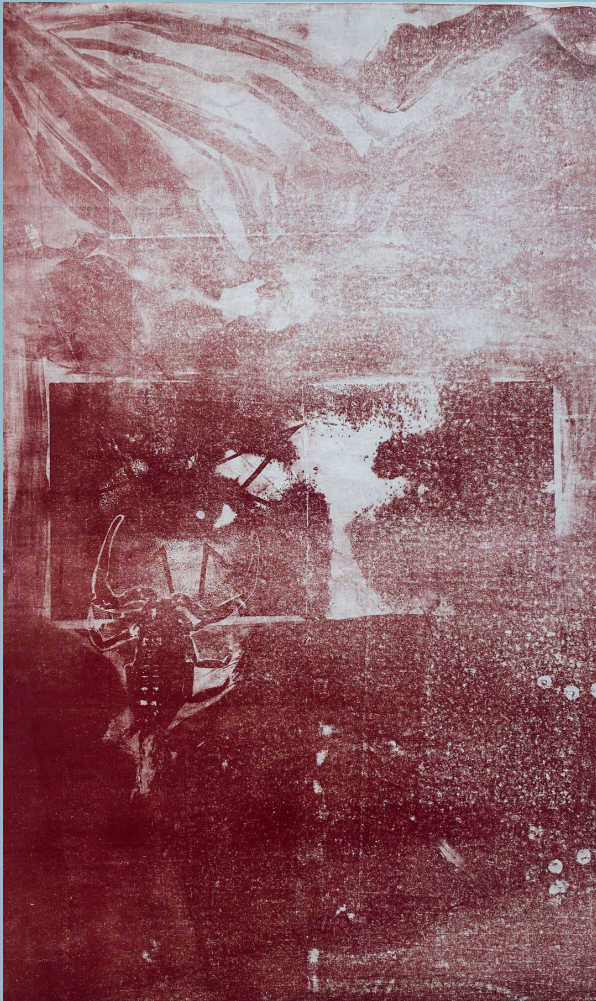
I no longer feel, like the feeling
to be blue. I can't tell where it
can feel, and I can feel the stones
in the chair. It's a nauseating
it meant the end of it all. Now
I know it is just being here.

"Un peu à gauche aller to coucher, ma fille."

A voice snaps me out of the mirage, placing a hand on my shoulder. "Ça va?"

I nod, confused and unsettled, and I stand up, guided by the hand, into my room, into
my bed. Even the free have a bedtime - but I cannot get the image of the car ring out of
my head.

LEFTOVER PAPER AFTER MAKING A PRINT, 2025,
WATERLESS LITHOGRAPHY



ALACRÁN, 2025, WATERLESS LITHOGRAPHY.

**BOTH THESE PRINTS WERE MADE FROM THE SAME
PLATE. THE IMAGE ON THE RIGHT HAS BEEN BROKEN
DOWN FROM CONTINUOUS PRINTING.**

I know there are oil rigs across the sea, 2025, Acrylic Painting



THE OIL RIGS

They are like small pieces of dust dancing across a glass table; if I looked towards a bright lamp, they would all be gone in an instant. But my eyes are now fully used to the dark, and I can start to see the glow from the horizon. It is there and I can see it. And for a brief moment I know there are oil rigs across the sea.

I know there are oil rigs across the sea, 2025



The moments of recognising the absurd are hard to remember. They are triggered suddenly and strike quickly. The moment is over as fast as it started; but the effects of it are significant. "At any street corner the feeling of absurdity can strike any man in the face." writes Camus, "As it is, in its distressing nudity, in its light without effulgence, it is elusive."^[1]

Trying to relive the feeling, as we often do with other types of emotions, is very difficult. What we often remember is what we were seeing and doing in that instant; what street corner we were walking around. The image develops a narrative because of the sensations attached to it. Jean-François Lyotard, in the chapter Presence in his book *Que Peindre?* (What to paint?) when describing presence as a sensory event, describes the image of a specific shade of blue that triggers the memory of pedalling through Vendée in July. The shade of blue is then subconsciously associated with the sensory event.^[2] It is a similar idea with the absurd, the feeling is elusive, but the image of the moment is not. These visuals are what I tend to go back to. They are the evidence of that moment of lucidity that is so significant to understand the absurd.

The desert is the sword with which the absurd can strike; it is void of life, lonely and uncertain, and provides the perfect setting for the moment to take place. Emptiness is needed for the 'silence to form in us' (as Janine describes at the end of *The Adulterous Woman*).^[3]

This is why the image of the oil rigs is significant. The void engulfs everything, the desert at night towers over a never-ending sea. The air is thick and heavy with humidity, and it blurs the horizon line from how dense it is. Only once your eyes are used to the night, you can briefly see the flickering of the lights in the distance. They are fleeting, almost as if they were never there, yet you know for certain they were. You try to relive the feeling time and time again, but every time the only thing you can remember after it are the oil rigs across the sea.

Everyone has a different desert that they get struck with, it does not have to be a literal one. The presence of that void is what brings the feeling upon someone. It is the assertion and realisation of the absurd then in that moment of Nada that allows us to revolt against the irrational and live regardless of it. The feeling is life-affirming.

In the essay *The Art of Existence*, for the *Avoiding the Void* exhibition catalogue, Ashley Woodward mentions that the artworks, besides expressing the emotions of the artists, when looked at from an existentialist perspective "are also testimonies to extreme states of being which shed light on the shared human predicament."^[4]

These extreme states are hard to describe analytically, and it is through art that they can sometimes be better understood. This is why art is so important in the context of the absurd; why Camus' novels seem more accurate when describing the feeling of it, why Esslin is so critical of existentialists for telling rather than showing, and why the visual image of the void through the desert is so linked to absurdity. The oil rigs are another light; another moment, in the desert of the void.

"The oil rigs are another light; another moment, in the desert of the void."



[1] Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, p. 9

[2] Jean-François Lyotard, *Que Peindre?* (1987; Hermann Éditeurs, 2008), pp. 15–16 <<https://ereader.perlego.com/1/book/4241549/1>>.

[3] Camus, *Exile and the Kingdom: Stories*, p. 16

[4] Ashley Woodward, *The Art of Existence - Avoiding the Void Exhibition Catalogue* (The Dax Centre, 2010) <<https://www.daxcentre.org/shop/avoiding-the-void-exhibition-catalogue>>.

CONCLUSION



Art is a crucial part of understanding and facing the absurd, and is better at doing this than the logical explanations in an essay. The creation of art not only allows us to “live doubly”^[1] in the face of the absurd as we revolt through it, but artwork that engages with absurdity can help us as viewers face the feelings that are needed to realise the void. It is the harrowing nature of the absurd that makes art so effective at expressing it. Where reason fails to make us face the elusive emotion of the void, art – as it is based on feeling – forces us to do so. It can recall that moment of lucidity.

This realisation then makes suicide not an option. Because there is no clear meaning to life, there is also no clear meaning to death. Suicide only enhances the absurdity.^[2] With the rejection of meaning and embracing of the absurd, one understands this. Art plays a crucial role as it helps us realise the absurd and eventually reject suicide.

The art mentioned throughout this essay shows evidence for its superiority when expressing the feelings of the absurd; Esslin argues for the advantage of theatre through its revealing of absurdity, Camus’ novels illustrate the feelings he describes in his essays for the readers to feel them for themselves, El Topo makes the absurd an experience throughout it with its visuals, Eva Hesse’s pieces draws our eyes to the void, and Rhona Bitner’s empty stages help us get rid of the illusions that blind us from the irrational.

The creation of art is an absurd task, but that quality is what makes it genuine when expressing emotion, as it forces the artist to be spontaneous. Through instinct and emotion, the absurd is conveyed. This then helps us embrace and defy the absurd.

All of these artworks share the common ground of the image of the desert. The desert, whether it be literal or metaphorical, is connected to the absurd. It is the void; an empty and lawless place, and all that is significant to its inhabitants is enduring in it.^[3] It provides us with the necessary emptiness for perceiving the irrational, and makes us face meaninglessness without illusions. It is not the oil rigs themselves that are important, but the emptiness that surrounds them. Like us, they inhabit and wrestle with the void every day.



This desert can appear in different ways. In theatre, it presents itself as a minimalist stage and language, stripping the illusions away to reveal the void. It can also be a physical, inescapable place like in *El Topo*, or an insinuation of a desert with Eva Hesse's striking empty spaces. "The desert is a circle", one which traps us into realising the absurd. Once you realise it, you can never leave the place. In the case of Camus' own novels, the moving description of the silent desert night is what shows the characters, and his readers, the realisation of the absurdity of life.

Making this connection between the absurd, art, and the desert is why in my own work I have tried to appeal to this feeling, and it has become important to focus on emotion; so that it can be transmitted in its entirety. Too much reflection makes it harder to recall the feeling of the absurd.

This research has been incredibly helpful in understanding the importance of art and the process of creating artwork relevant to the feelings of absurdity. The understanding of the large role that emotion plays, to help us not only understand meaninglessness but face it, has shown the advantage art has in this subject, and has explored how the desert is used to achieve this. Although there is some disagreement within the theory of the absurd with regards to how emotional of a topic it might be, the fact that it is the subject of so many artworks and drive of many artists would suggest it is inevitably emotive.



[1] Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, p. 91

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 2

[3] Zahareas, p. 6

REFERENCES

- Bantel, Robyn A., "The Experiences of Nausea and Adventure: An Analysis of the Opposition of Existence and Being in Sartre's Nausea," *Research in Phenomenology*, 11.1 (1981), pp. 25–40, JSTOR, doi:10.1163/156916481x00027
- Beauvoir, Simone de, *Pyrrhus and Cineas - Philosophical Writings* (1944; University of Illinois, 2004)
<<https://archive.org/details/philosophicalwri0000beau/mode/2up>>
- Bitner, Rhona, M1 - STAGE, 2008, Photography <<https://rhonabitner.com/stage>>
- , O1 - STAGE, 2008, Photography <<https://rhonabitner.com/stage>>
- Camus, Albert, *Exile and the Kingdom: Stories* (1957; Penguin UK, 2013), pp. 1–16
- , *The Myth of Sisyphus*, trans. by Justin O'Brien (1942; Penguin Books, 2005)
- , *The Rebel* (1951; 1st ed., Penguin Classics, 2000)
- , *The Stranger* (1946; Vintage, 1989)
- De Cramer, Alexandra, "The Radical Notion of the 'Mediterranean Spirit' and Why We Need It Now More than Ever," *Monocle*, 2025 <<https://monocle.com/culture/society-how-we-live/radical-notion-of-mediterranean-spirit/>>
- Esslin, Martin, "The Theatre of the Absurd," *The Tulane Drama Review*, 4.4 (1960), pp. 3–15, doi:10.2307/1124873
- , *The Theatre of the Absurd* (1961; Vintage Books, 2004)
<<https://faculty.uobasrah.edu.iq/uploads/teaching/1642439873.pdf>>
- Freeman, Timothy J, "Myth of Sisyphus," in *Existentialism Philosophy* 360, no. 16, University of Hawaii, 2010
<<https://www2.hawaii.edu/~freeman/courses/phil360/16.%20Myth%20of%20Sisyphus.pdf>>
- Gordon, Jeffrey, "Nagel or Camus on the Absurd?," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 45.1 (1984), pp. 15–28, JSTOR, doi:10.2307/2107324
- Hauser & Wirth, "Eva Hesse," Hauser & Wirth, n.d. <<https://www.hauserwirth.com/artists/2810-eva-hesse/>>
- Hesse, Eva, *Hang Up*, 1966, Acrylic, cloth, wood, cord, steel, The Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago
<<https://www.hauserwirth.com/artists/2810-eva-hesse/?id=2810-eva-hesse&lightbox=hang-up>>
- , *No Title*, 1969, Ink and graphite on paper, Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin
<<https://www.hauserwirth.com/artists/2810-eva-hesse/?id=2810-eva-hesse&lightbox=no-title>>
- Ionesco, Eugene, *Exit the King* (1962; Malthouse/Belvoir, 2007) <<https://www.scribd.com/document/830367095/Exit-the-King-by-Eugene-Ionesco>>
- Jodorowsky, Alejandro (dir.), *El Topo* (ABKCO Films, 1970)

Kierkegaard, Soren, *The Concept of Anxiety: A Simple Psychologically Oriented Deliberation in View of the Dogmatic Problem of Hereditary Sin* (1844; W. W. Norton & Company, 2014)

Lyotard, Jean-François, *Que Peindre?* (1987; Hermann Éditeurs, 2008), pp. 15–16

<<https://ereader.perlego.com/1/book/4241549/1>>

Nagel, Thomas, "The Absurd," *The Journal of Philosophy*, 68.20 (1971), pp. 716–27,

doi:<https://doi.org/10.2307/2024942>

Nobel Prize, "Nobel Prize in Literature 1957," NobelPrize.Org, 2025

<<https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/literature/1957/summary/>>

Piede, Samantha, "Showing, Telling, or Proselytizing the Absurd : Dramatic Conventions in the Works of Albert Camus and Eugène Ionesco / by Samantha Piede." (unpublished Masters Thesis, Millersville University of Pennsylvania, 2018)

<<https://www.jstor.org/stable/community.31982624>>

Rivière, Briton, *The Temptation in the Wilderness*, 1898, Oil on Canvas, Guildhall Art Gallery, London

<[https://artsandculture.google.com/asset/the-temptation-in-the-wilderness-briton-rivi%C3%A8re/-QFxtTGDSmsIQw?](https://artsandculture.google.com/asset/the-temptation-in-the-wilderness-briton-rivi%C3%A8re/-QFxtTGDSmsIQw?hl=en)

[hl=en](https://artsandculture.google.com/asset/the-temptation-in-the-wilderness-briton-rivi%C3%A8re/-QFxtTGDSmsIQw?hl=en)>

Rotger, Francesc M., "Albert Camus, an Algerian of Minorcan Origin," European Institute of the Mediterranean, n.d.

<<https://www.iemed.org/publication/albert-camus-an-algerian-of-minorcan-origin/>>

Saint-Exupéry, Antoine de, *The Little Prince* (Wordsworth Editions, 1995)

Sefler, George F., "The Existential Vs. The Absurd: The Aesthetics of Nietzsche and Camus," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 32.3 (1974), pp. 415–21, JSTOR, doi:<https://doi.org/10.2307/428426>

The New York Times, "Is 'El Topo' a Con?," *The New York Times*, May 23, 1971

<<https://www.nytimes.com/1971/05/23/archives/is-el-topo-a-con-is-el-topo-a-con.html>>

Woodward, Ashley, "Camus and Nihilism," *Sophia*, 50.4 (2011), pp. 543–59, doi:10.1007/s11841-011-0274-0

——, *The Art of Existence - Avoiding the Void Exhibition Catalogue* (The Dax Centre, 2010)

<<https://www.daxcentre.org/shop/avoiding-the-void-exhibition-catalogue>>

Zahareas, Anthony, "La Femme Adultère: Camus's Ironie Vision of the Absurd," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, 5.3 (1963), pp. 319–28, JSTOR, doi:<https://www.jstor.org/stable/40753767>

